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Logan firm among top workplaces in the state

Author: From staff and wire reports

Article Text:

The Sunshine Terrace Foundation in Logan has been named one of the top 10 places in Utah to work by the Department of Workforce Services.

Sunshine Terrace — which runs nursing and assisted living centers — lets aging relatives of 302 employees use its adult day care center. It also pays employees college tuition.

The top 10 winners, selected at a lunch banquet Tuesday by Workforce Services from among 50 entries, were announced by Gov. Jon Huntsman.

"Being sensitive to employee needs is absolutely critical," said Huntsman, a Republican who has made business development his top priority since taking office in January.

Chief executives say treating employees well encourages loyalty, cuts down on job turnover, improves productivity and can make for happy customers. Many of these companies get involved in employees' family and social lives, and even encourage physical fitness — some have gyms right at the workplace.

Promoting balance in work and personal lives for employees is good business, said D. Scott Ideson, chief executive for Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Utah, one of the Top 10 companies for the past six of the seven years the awards have been made.

Regence offers child care right at the office; other companies subsidize child care at nearby centers.

A newcomer this year was Radius Engineering Inc., a Salt Lake manufacturer of composite materials for everything from ski poles to aircraft parts.

With just 17 employees and the smallest company on the list, Radius can't afford to offer child care at its new ergonomic and "green" factory, but it lets employees work flexible hours and take time off for family emergencies.

Working at Radius is not an 8-to-5 job; it's about getting the job done. Workers say they keep track of their own schedules and take care of their own customers — and sometimes skip out to go skiing.

The biggest winner was 1,702-employee ARUP Laboratories, a pathology reference laboratory owned by the University of Utah that handles more than 20,000 specimens of blood and o! their body fluids and tissue biopsies every day for hospitals and clinics nationwide.

ARUP offers tuition reimbursement, even for family members of employees, has a library and fitness center for workers and promotes healthy lifestyles with awards.

1-800 Contacts may offer the most plush employee benefits — a gourmet cafeteria, breakfast at no charge and discounted lunch and dinners. Like all the companies on the list, it also provides flexible work hours and full benefits even for part-time workers.

That strategy pays off: With 606 employees, 1-800 Contacts has one of the lowest job turnover rates in the call center business, and customers return at a rate of 85 percent for contact lenses, said the Draper, Utah, company's chief executive and founder Jonathan Coon, who is known to wash his own dishes at the cafeteria.

Coon encourages workers to take a day off "anytime we are feeling burned out," according to employee testimonials collected by the Department of Workforce Services. "It's not often you hear that from the top, and he really meant it."

Other winners on the list were:

—Consultants Employer Solutions Group, Orem, which offers "generous" health and welfare benefits for 30 employees.

—Futura Industries, Clearfield, which makes structural and other parts out of aluminum and vinyl, offers rich benefits for 198 workers and family scholarships.

—NPS Pharmaceuticals, Salt Lake, with worldwide sales of treatments for bone and mineral disorders, among other remedies, offers "exceptional" benefits for 336 employees and an ergonomic workplace. (State officials didn't reveal each company's benefits in detail, but one NPS benefit pays legal expenses for employees who adopt children.)

— Redmond Inc., Springville, best known for its grainy and mineral rich "sea salt" that's mined in central Utah, sponsors regular family activities for its 98 workers.

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